

Message Text

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PAGE 01 KINSHA 09962 141607Z

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ACTION AF-06

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 EB-07 OC-05 CCO-00 TRSE-00 CIAE-00

INR-07 NSAE-00 /026 W

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R 141445Z NOV 75

FM AMEMBASSY KINSHASA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5297

INFO USDOC WASHDC

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE KINSHASA 9962

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: EFIN, ETEL, CG

SUBJECT: POTENTIAL COMMUNICATIONS BREAKDOWNS: ITT AND RCA

REF: KINSHASA 9817

1. EMBASSY HAS HAD RECENT VISITS FROM REPS OF BOTH ITT AND RCA. EACH HAD TALE OF WOE REGARDING NON-PAYMENT OF ACCOUNTS OUTSTANDING OR NON-AVAILABILITY OF FOREIGN EXCHANGE FOR CRITICAL PARTS. LIKELIHOOD OF COMMUNICATIONS INTERRUPTIONS GROWING.

2. ITT STORY HAS THREE CHAPTERS. FIRST IN NON-PAYMENT OF BILLS FOR TELECOMMUNICATIONS RESCUE OPERATION AT TIME OF ALI-FOREMAN FIGHT. SECOND IS RESCUE OPERATION AT TIME OF FRENCH PRESIDENT GISCARD D'ESTAING VISIT. THIRD IS FOREIGN EXCHANGE NEEDED TO PURCHASE PARTS ASSOCIATED WITH CHANGEOVER TO NEW FREQUENCIES ENVISIONED AS STANDARD TRANSMISSION CHANNELS WITH NEWLY LAUNCHED COMMUNICATIONS SATELLITES. SLIPPAGE IN PUTTING NEW SATELLITES INTO OPERATION HAS GIVEN ZAIRE SLIGHT REPRIEVE. NEVERTHELESS, NEW SATELLITES WILL GO OPERATIONAL DECEMBER 7. CUSTOMER COUNTRIES WILL THEN COME ON LINE SERIALY, WITH ZAIRE'S CHANGEOVER DATE PROBABLY DECEMBER 16 OR 17. IF FOREIGN EXCHANGE MADE AVAILABLE TODAY, LEADTIME REMAINING AMOUNTS TO BARELY ONE MONTH.

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PAGE 02 KINSHA 09962 141607Z

TECHNICIAN NOW IN ZAIRE TO IMPLEMENT CHANGEOVER DOUBTS THAT USUAL TEN-TWELVE WEEK TIME FRAME FOR PREPARATION

AND SHIPMENT OF NECESSARY PARTS CAN BE SHORTENED SUFFICIENTLY TO AVOID INTERRUPTION OF SERVICE. ITT TAKING INCREASINGLY HARD LINE BOTH ON PAYMENT OF ARREARAGES AND ON RECEIPT OF FOREIGN EXCHANGE FOR NEW PARTS PRIOR TO ACTING ON GROUND STATION CHANGEOVER.

3. RCA PROVIDES SERVICE ON MOBILE COLOR TELEVISION UNITS HERE AND ON MICROWAVE TV TRANSMISSION CIRCUITS IN KINSHASA AREA. NON-PAYMENT FOR PARTS AND SERVICES ON LAST YEAR'S CONTRACT AS WELL AS ON CURRENT CONTRACT HAS LED TO DEPARTURE OF TWO MEMBERS OF FOUR-MAN TEAM. OTHER TWO TO DEPART NOV 16. THEY LEAVING DOOR OPEN TO RETURN IF SOME PAYMENT RECEIVED, BUT TEAM LEADER INDICATES THEY WILL NOT RPT NOT BE BACK BEFORE THEN. IMPACT OF TEAM'S DEPARTURE NEITHER IMMEDIATE NOR CATASTROPHIC. NEVERTHELESS, RESULTS COULD EASILY BE LACK OF MOBILE COLOR TELEVISION COVERAGE ON NOVEMBER 24 AND, UNDER WORST OF CIRCUMSTANCES, POSSIBLE INTERRUPTION OF ALL TELEVISION SERVICE IN KINSHASA AREA.

4. MONEY DUE ITT FOR ALL THREE REQUIREMENT SOMEWHERE IN EXCESS OF \$200,000. RCA SOMEWHAT LESS THAN THAT.

5. AS REPORTED REFTEL, EMBOFFS HAVE DISCUSSED ITT PROBLEMS WITH COMMISSIONER OF FINANCE BOFOSSA WHO SAID HE WOULD LOOK INTO PROBLEM.
WALKER

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: EQUIPMENT, TRACKING STATIONS, DEBT REPAYMENTS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 14 NOV 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: ShawDG
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975KINSHA09962
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750398-0141
From: KINSHASA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19751142/aaaablqc.tel
Line Count: 88
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION AF
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 75 KINSHASA 9817
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: ShawDG
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 02 SEP 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <02 SEP 2003 by BoyleJA>; APPROVED <19 DEC 2003 by ShawDG>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
06 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: POTENTIAL COMMUNICATIONS BREAKDOWNS: ITT AND RCA
TAGS: EFIN, ETEL, CG
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 06 JUL 2006